

Dr Nikki Williams
Chief Executive, NSW Minerals Council

4th Dungog Film Festival, Opening Night
27 May 2010 – James Theatre, Dungog, NSW

Minister for the Arts, the Honourable Virginia Judge... and Ladies and Gentlemen...

Like Felix and Oscar in 'The Odd Couple', NSW Mining and Australian film has been labelled a mis-match in the past, but the reality of this relationship couldn't be more different.

We established our special association more than three years ago – not long after the birth of the Festival –and boy has it been a wild ride.

I am very proud to be here again on behalf of the NSW mining industry as the Principal Presenting Sponsor of the fourth Dungog Film Festival. Our ongoing sponsorship means this Festival has been able to evolve and become bigger and better each year.

This is a unique event that we truly believe in. By sponsoring this Festival, we are aiming to inspire energy, innovation and creativity; create economic and artistic opportunities; and grow diverse regional communities.

Our support for this festival is a tangible investment in the economic future and social fabric of the Hunter Valley. We are helping to bring cutting edge culture to the region as well as providing another platform for local business to develop a more diverse and prosperous Hunter economy.

There's no conspiracy in ensuring that the Hunter community has a thriving arts and cultural scene: it's a barometer of the strength of the region.

Our sponsorship is also a partnership with the Dungog community. Last year we helped Dungog High School to buy film and editing equipment to inspire the next

generation of film makers. Students from the school produced a fabulous short film, which screened to great acclaim on the final night of the Festival last year, and I understand they've got something up their sleeves again this weekend.

And that is one of the great successes of this event. The way the community has embraced this festival and what it stands for is quite simply outstanding. The volunteer work, the educational programs, the social events and the hospitality shown to the thousands of visitors that come to the town are second to none.

One of the highlights for me this weekend will be the Dungog Main Street Parade, when the Shire gets to showcase its produce, its people and its community spirit. The event has grown organically through members of the community and we are glad to have been able to provide them with some support this year.

If you read the commentary in the papers recently about the new tax on mining, you would be forgiven for thinking that our industry is just about a bunch of business people – well let's face it, mainly businessmen – in suits in big cities like Sydney and London. But the reality is the people employed in mining are real people, with real families working in real towns like Singleton, Muswellbrook, Gresford and Dungog.

And it is in those towns and through those people that we see so many inspirational stories worthy of sharing with a bigger audience.

My team here tonight from the NSW Minerals Council is looking forward to the screening of 'Beneath Hill 60' on Sunday. The film tells the remarkable story of Australian miners – including a father and son from Wallsend near Newcastle – who were recruited into the army in World War I to build tunnels under enemy lines on the Western Front. Whilst it sometimes feels like we are an industry literally in the trenches, this is an inspiring story from a talented team and we can't wait to see it.

Mining plays a big role in the stories of thousands of people in the Hunter region and hundreds of thousands throughout Australia. We hope the Dungog Film Festival inspires the community to explore new opportunities in their own lives and that the Australian film industry is encouraged to dig deeper and in more unusual places to

unearth our extraordinary and diverse Aussie stories and the remarkable people eager to tell them.

The Dungog Film Festival in itself is a remarkable Aussie story. It started out small and has grown to see 6,000 people come through the town in a single weekend. That's thousands of people who would never have been exposed to Dungog and what it has to offer, pouring an estimated \$2 million annually into the local economy.

Mining is a big contributor to the Hunter economy as well, directly employing more than 14,000 people and indirectly supporting another 65,000 jobs. Around \$2 billion a year is invested into the economy through payments to local suppliers, plus millions more goes to local pubs, hairdressers and cinemas where miners and their families spend their wages.

But this isn't just about money for sponsorship or the economic contribution we make. NSW Mining is here in partnership with the Festival to help deliver a world class event in the Hunter. That's why the NSW Mining team has been hard at work behind the scenes for months and will keep that up over the next three days on the ground as well.

If you believe the weather bureau, we could be looking at a bit of rain during the festival, much like we had in 2009. But that didn't stop anyone from having a great time. Last year the NSW Mining team worked around the clock, in the mud and the driving rain, to make sure the Miners Marquee was operational across the weekend. The rain won't stop us this weekend either and tickets to this year's NSW Mining Rock 'n' Reel party are so hot right now... and it promises to be another sell out event!

NSW Mining congratulates and commends the Festival for its untiring determination to produce a program each year that is constantly innovating and adding new dimensions to what is already a jammed pack program. Thinking outside the box with initiatives like this year's 'Speed Auditioning' are a testament to the team's commitment to encouraging "undiscovered" talent into the world of film. And in their

acceptance speech at the AFI Awards, they'll be able to say it all started at the Dungog Film Festival.

On behalf of NSW Mining and the industry it represents, I'd like to wish Allannah, Stavros, your extraordinary Festival team and everyone in Dungog a wonderful weekend and thank you for putting on yet another "ripper" Aussie event.